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ABSTRACT

Three separate studies of three different school superintendents are reported on in terms of the effect of leadership styles on organizational cultures. The analysis used nine descriptors derived from Schein's comprehensive description of leadership in the conduct of organizational culture creation. The report is based on historical and ethnographic studies conducted by three graduate doctoral students. The first superintendent who was studied transformed the structure of a county school district into a system linked to the superintendent's office through technology and personnel. The second superintendent changed his urban district's growth orientation to an emphasis on learning and instruction by manipulating several cultural elements. The third superintendent transformed his organization from a highly centralized and bureaucratic organization to a decentralized system consisting of a lean central office andd an active system of representatives from all levels of the organization. The activities of each superintendent can be analyzed according to leadership styles defined by Schein, including "insider" leadership, leadership with "vision," and leadership through "cognitive redefinition." The conclusion based on this analysis is that the "creation of culture" requires change in the areas of activities, relational patterns, and attitudes, and the redefinition of organizational functions. (GJ)

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A COMPARISON OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND OGANIZATIONAL CULTURES

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I wish to acknowledge the contribution three doctoral students, H. R. Fisher, W. E. Hendrick, and D. F. Wissler, made to this analysis. Even though the present report cannot do justice to the richness and detail of each dissertation study, the comparison between the three superintendents and their organizations could not have been accomplished without each separate study.

A Comparison of Leadership Styles and Organizational Cultures

This paper reports three separate studies of three different school superintendents (Fischer, 1983; Hendrick, 1983; Wissler, 1984) who through their differing leadership styles developed different organizational cultures. The objective is to show the relationship between leadership styles and organizational cultures. This purpose is consistent with the current debate in organizational theory and development centers regarding organizational cultures and the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency. For schools, the objective is consistent with the current school reform movement. This report, thus, attempts to answer the question: How are school leadership styles and organizational cultures related to the delivery of educational services?

Theoretical Framework

Schein's (1985) definition of culture and descriptions of effective "culture creation" leadership are the theoretical constructs used as a means to analyze three superintendencies. Schein defines culture as

> a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new

members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (9).

If Schein's definition of culture is accepted as the proper way for investigating school cultures, the associated descriptions of leadership must, therefore, be included. In this particular case, where the intention is to relate culture to leadership style and this is to be demonstrated through reporting "culture changes" within the organizations, Schein's descriptions of "culture creation" leadership is most appropriate.

Schein presents a comprehensive description of leadership requirements in the conduct of organizational culture creation. In the present analysis nine descriptors, in varying degrees, are applicable to the three superintendents. The descriptors are: (a) the leaders realize their function is to manipulate their organizational culture; (b) the leaders possess a vision and an ability to articulate it and enforce it, through the inducement of a "cognitive redefinition"; (c) the leaders are persistent and patient; (d) the leaders although without precise answers and solutions provide temporary stability and emotional reassurances while the organization is undergoing its changes through the creation of involvement and participation; (e) the leaders possess insight into the ways in which culture can aid or hinder the fulfillment of the organization's mission and the intervention skills to make desired changes happen; (f) the "insider" type of leader is able to surmount his own culture

and change those aspects that need to be changed (Schein claims this is the ultimate in leadership {322}; (g) the leaders perceive the organizational problem coupled with the insight into culture and its dysfunctional elements; (h) the leader is willing to intervene in the cultural process with the ability to be concerned for the organization above and beyond the self, communicating dedication or commitment to the group above and beyond self interest; and finally, (i) the leaders possess emotional strength (317-326).

In the present report, it is hypothesized that the above mentioned descriptors play out in varying degrees depending on the (1) type of organization, (2) type of cultural change required, (3) speed with which change must occur and (4) types of external and internal factors acting upon the organization. The theoretical analysis of how three superintedents changed their organizations' cultures is a demonstration of the degrees to which Schein's leadership descriptors apply.

Methods and Techniques

This report is based on three separate historical and ethnographic studies of three separate superintendents conducted by three doctoral students (Fischer, 1983; Hendrick, 1983; Wissler, 1984). Each study demonstrates the relationship betwen leadership styles and the organizational cultures they created. The method being presently used is to contrast the findings of the three studies to draw some

conclusions. Even though each study was conceived, conducted and analyzed independently, the present effort is to consider the findings of the three studies in order to understand how organizations and leaders function.

The data are drawn from three different school superintendents in three different school districts in Southern California. One superintendent headed a county office. The county consisted of many schools and independent school districts varying in size and type. Because most of the schools were in remote rural or desert areas, the county superintendent's office had the potential for assuming a critical role in the delivery of educational services. The data for this study were collected through the examination of a school system's historical records as well as other pertinent materials spanning the period between 1893 and 1980. Data were also collected through interviews. School personnel, state legislators and county residents as well as school board members were interviewed. The focus for this report is the period between 1951 and 1980, with particular emphasis on the latest superintendent who assumed office in 1970.

The second superintendent headed a large urban school district. The school district was under court desegregation orders, had just previously experienced growth, but at the time that the superintendent took office, its enrollment was rapidly declining. A high school and several feeder schools had to be closed. Data for this study were collected

through observation, interviews and document analysis. The superintendent was observed from the time he assumed the office through the closing of several schools and finally to the stabilization of the district, a period of 18 months. Interviews were conducted with school board members, school personnel, and community persons as well as parents.

The third superintendent headed a large school district. This district, although highly bureaucratic, was reputed for its exemplary school programs. The superintendent assumed the post with the personal intention to decentralize the organization and provide educational services to all children through the participation of all organizational members. Data were collected through the examination of records covering 18 years. District records, board minutes, newspaper articles, personal correspondence and many other types of written documents were examined and analyzed. Interview data were collected from individuals who were participants during the superintendent's tenure. Board members, school personnel, parents, students and community representatives were interviewed. The superintendent was also observed for a period of one quarter as he taught a university class a course dealing with the school superintendency.

The present report contrasts and compares the findings reported in each of the above mentioned studies. The report confines itself to the findings related to the superintendents' leadership styles and the organizations' cultures

they created during their tenure. The analytical concepts which are used are culture and leadership descriptors. The intent is to show how leadership styles are related to organizational cultures. In this instance, each of the superintendents "created" new cultures from the ones they inherited.

Analysis

Schein's (1985) definition of culture contains three important aspects. First, an organizational culture is a pattern of basic assumptions. Second, these assumptions enable the participants to cope with the organizational problems and third, these assumptions work so that there's validity to them which insures their persistence. In the present analysis of the three school districts, we can detect a pattern of assumptions which are similar in some respects but different in others. For example, all three districts operated under the assumption that they were to deliver educational services. They differed in their assumptions regarding to whom, how and when to deliver educational services. Each of the studies demonstrates how each district coped with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. Each of the studies demonstrates how each district saw validity in the manner by which the "new" culture was created from the old. Most importantly, each study demonstrates a differing leadership style in order to insure the creation of a lasting culture. This

analysis, thus, identifies the fundamental assumptions within a culture which could be manipulated: the to whom, how and when to deliver educational services and the associated particular leadership descriptor.

The first district was a county school district consisting of many fragmented, small rural schools and school districts as well as a few large urban schools. During the superintendent's tenure, the school's enrollment increased and the technological advancements and political changes of the previous two decades linked the school district in new and different ways. The superintendent's office adapted to these external forces in two different ways. The superintendent integrated his immediate office structure and linked the county schools and school districts to it in an integrative, mutually dependent manner. To state it another way, the structure of the county schools was transformed into a system linked to the superintendent's office through technology and personnel.

The structure resembled a system of markets with the superintendent's office serving as the marketplace. In this context, the superintendent's office sold and provided educational services to all units who bought or bargained. The superintendent's style was charismatic, the organizational culture was one of constant activity and entrepeneurship. The educational services were provided to those who bought or bargained, through an open market system when schools or school districts needed or wished services.

The schools received services commensurate to the buying and negotiating acuity of the respective administrators. Because educational services are not products, the necessity for cooperation, communication and sharing between the units emerged. This necessity created linkages and networks which resulted in a functional adaptation to external forces and cohesion and integration internally both within the superintendent's county office and each school or school district. This feat can be appreciated when it is realized that this structure spanned large geographic areas. The process took place over a period of ten years.

The second superintendent assumed a school district which was experiencing rapid decline after many years of growth. The superintendent rose from the elementary school teaching ranks providing him with tremendous symbolic power which he effectively utilized among teachers. He transformed the school district's "growth is better" cultural orientation to "learning and instruction is our business" cultural orientation by manipulating several cultural elements. First he focused on maintaining a strong relationship with the school district's teachers. He participated in many critical activities for teachers in his efforts to retain their support. Teachers' efforts were widely acknowledged. Second, he stripped the central office, closed one high school and several feeder schools. Throughout these acts, parental support for excellence in education was recognized through public ceremonies. Many

activities were utilized to build and maintain commitment and loyalty from parents and community representatives. Third, because the mission of the institution was so strongly focused upon, educational services were delivered at the classroom level in a renewed and uniform way. The consequences of this symbolic leadership style were an overall improvement of the organization and the creation of an optimistic and excellence in instruction and teaching culture.

The third superintendent transformed his organization from a highly centralized and bureaucratic organization to an organization with a lean central office dedicated to "servicing" schools and students, and an active system of "clusters" consisting of representatives from all levels of the organization. The creation of a new culture in this organization began with the intentional leader's assumption that all children must receive excellent educational services. Educational services were to be delivered by all school personnel. Social relationships within and without the organization were altered from an almost military, bureaucratic structure to a decentralized organization whose organizational chart consisted of concentric circles. These social relationships were altered in order to provide direct access to the superintendent with the express intention of improving the delivery of educational services. This intentional leader systematically replaced an "old" culture with a "new" one.

Schein (1985) claims that the ultimate in leadership is to have an "insider" type of leader able to surmount his own culture and change those aspects that need to be changed. In the present report we have an example of such a leader. This leader rose from the elementary school teaching ranks during the district's rapid growth to assume the superintendency during the district's dramatic decline. In analyzing the process by which this leader created a new culture, the descriptors Schein provides are useful. First, this leader had a keen awareness that his function was to manipulate the orgnizational culture. He did this through symbolic means. He began with the vision that "learning and instruction is the school's business." He was able to articulate it and enforce it, primarily because of his strong attachment to the teachers, but also because his career began as an elmentary school teacher. (See Levinson (1982) for a comparison of elementary and secondary school principals' orientations). He also provided temporary stability and emotional reassurance while the organization was undergoing its changes through the use of involvement and participation of those persons most directly affected, teachers and parents. This leader also had unusual insight into the ways in which culture could aid or hinder the fulfillment of the organization's mission. The central office was stripped while the schools were being closed. These acts carried out simultaneoulsy preserved the institution's intentions even though it was decreasing in size.

This leader was also willing to make decisions (reducing the central office) which might have adversely affected him while he was trying to transform the overall organizational culture of decline, low morale and disorientation to one of optimism and educational excellence. He fulfilled the above mentioned requirements with emotional strength within 18 months.

Schein's (1985) analysis of organizational cultures and leadership indicates that leaders cannot manage orgnizational cultures without "vision." In the present analysis, we have an example of a superintendent who intentionally, systematically actualized his vision of a school district's culture. He began with the vision that all children must receive the best educational services possible and that all participants in the school district must engage in this endeavor with enthusiasm and commitment. His ability to articulate it and enforce it was derived from the trust and integrity he had garnered in the school district. But aside from his personal attributes, he also had an intellectual in his office staff who was responsible for researching, analyzing and explaining the institution's functions.

This leader also differs from the one mentioned above, in that he took 18 years to transform his school district from a highly bureaucratic to a decentralized one. This leader most clearly demonstrates the provision of stability and emotional reassurance during a period of organizational

change. This leader was as concerned about the process of change as the consequences. In fact, the "creation of organization's culture" included the assumption that the quality of organizational participation is equally as important as the outcomes. Thus, this leader's requirement of orgnizational members' involvement and participation was qualitatively determined. He instructed organizational personnel through a structure of clusters in which ranks and hierarchy were absent and direct access to him was possible for all. He also instructed personnel in decisionmaking processes. This process created a culture of "servicing" while the organization's goals were being fulfilled. The degree to which this individual dedicated and committed himself to the institution above and beyond his self-interest is indicated in the risks he took in empowering organizational members through the cluster system. The above mentioned acts display emotional strength.

The third superintendent is an example of a leader who manipulated the organizational culture through the inducement of a "cognitive redefinition" of his office. External forces, political and technological, imposed demands on an office responsible for an unwieldy organization. Secure in the rightness of the organizaiton's mission, providing educational services, the superintendent could through the involvement and participation of school personnel adapt and integrate its members. This leader, thus, created a market place from which educational services would be sold and

bargained. Stability and emotional reassurance were provided to both the county superintendent's office personnel and the schools' and school district prsonnel through the entrepreneural activity generated by "the market." This leader took advantage of the political and technological changes as he intervened in the organization in order to "create" an appropriate culture that could provide the necessary educational services. His self interest was replaced by his dedication and commitment to the organization's mission as he "risked" structuring the county office in a new way. This charismatic leader exhuded confidence, enthusism and emotional strength.

Conclusions

What may we conclude from this analysis? The "creation of culture" requires changes in four different areas: activities, relational patterns, attitudes and reconceptualization or redefinition of organizational functions.

The symbolic superintendent emphasized instruction and learning; teachers assumed organizational importance, the participants became optimistic and enthusiastic over their work and their organization regained its vitality even though it was in decline rather than growth. The intentional leader decentralized his school district. The participants engaged in servicing without status differentiation. All children were expected to learn and all participants had

direct access to the superintendent. The charismatic leader "marketed" educational services in the best sense of the word. The sellers provided the best and the buyers were encouraged to bargain in order to provide quality education to their schools or school districts. Technology and political pressures served to benefit both the county offices and the separate school units.

In brief, a potential demoralized bureaucracy was transformed into a community where teaching, instruction and learning flourished. An almost militaristic bureaucracy was transformed into a decentralized community of concentric clusters of educational services and a sprawling, fragmented body of units was turned into a bureaucratic marketplace. Each leader improved his organization. Each leader maximized the delivery of educational services. Each leader stabilized his organization and retained his position.

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